

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 17

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By: **Delegates C. Davis and Valderrama**
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Assigned to: Commerce and Government Matters

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

1 A House Joint Resolution concerning

2 **The Return of the Bells of Balangiga**

3 FOR the purpose of urging the President of the United States to return the Bells of
4 Balangiga to the Republic of the Philippines.

5 WHEREAS, There are two church bells from the town of Balangiga in Samar,
6 Philippines that are encased in a monument at the Warren Air Force Base in
7 Cheyenne, Wyoming; and

8 WHEREAS, The church bells were taken by the U.S. Cavalry as a war prize
9 after an attack at Balangiga during the Philippine-American War of 1899-1902; and

10 WHEREAS, The confiscation of the Bells of Balangiga remains a blot on the
11 otherwise strong alliance between the Republic of the Philippines and the United
12 States of America;

13 WHEREAS, Opponents of returning the Bells of Balangiga regard them as a
14 memorial to the American soldiers killed in a surprise attack at Balangiga by Filipino
15 citizens and soldiers on September 28, 1901; and

16 WHEREAS, Filipino citizens regard the Bells of Balangiga as cultural artifacts
17 made by and for the people of the Philippines and they have taken on added
18 significance as a symbol of the struggle of the Filipino people against colonization and
19 for continuing independence; and

20 WHEREAS, The United States possesses the means to build a fitting memorial
21 to those soldiers who were killed at the attack at Balangiga without using artifacts
22 from the Philippines; and

23 WHEREAS, While American historians later described the surprise attack at
24 Balangiga as "unprovoked", the attack must rightfully be viewed in the context of the
25 Filipino struggle for independence from Spain and the United States and it should be
26 acknowledged that Americans may have employed no less "surprising" and
27 "unprovoked" means to fight for their own independence from Great Britain during
28 the Revolutionary War; and

1 WHEREAS, While atrocities were perpetrated on American soldiers during the
2 Balangiga attack, atrocities were also perpetrated on Filipino soldiers, as well as
3 women and children in retaliation for that attack, resulting from the command by
4 General "Jake" Smith to transform Balangiga into a "howling wilderness" of burning,
5 looting, rape, torture, and killing; and

6 WHEREAS, The resulting annihilation in Balangiga was so brutal that General
7 Jake Smith was later court-martialed and forced to retire from military service; and

8 WHEREAS, The presence of American troops in the Philippines in 1899 resulted
9 from the goal of the United States to colonize and own the Philippine Islands,
10 although the United States of America was founded on the principles of independence,
11 sovereignty, and freedom for people throughout the world and had just recently
12 assisted Cuba in its struggle for independence; and

13 WHEREAS, The United States government can afford to be merciful, gracious,
14 and generous and complete the healing process for those war actions taken nearly a
15 century ago; and

16 WHEREAS, Returning the Bells of Balangiga to the Philippine nation would
17 immeasurably enhance the standing of the United States in the world community and
18 would be a gesture of great respect from a large, powerful, wealthy nation to a small,
19 but no less sovereign nation; now, therefore, be it

20 RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the State
21 of Maryland supports the return of the two Bells of Balangiga that are now at the
22 Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming to the Republic of the Philippines and
23 urges the President of the United States to return the Bells of Balangiga to the
24 Republic of the Philippines with all deliberate speed; and be it further

25 RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded by the Department of
26 Legislative Services to the Maryland Congressional Delegation: Senators Paul S.
27 Sarbanes and Barbara A. Mikulski, Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510;
28 and Representatives Wayne T. Gilchrest, Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., Benjamin L. Cardin,
29 Albert R. Wynn, Steny Hamilton Hoyer, Roscoe G. Bartlett, Elijah E. Cummings, and
30 Constance A. Morella, House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515; and be it
31 further

32 RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be forwarded by the Department of
33 Legislative Services to the Honorable Parris N. Glendening, Governor of Maryland;
34 the Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr., President of the Senate of Maryland; and
35 the Honorable Casper R. Taylor, Jr., Speaker of the House of Delegates.